

Message Text

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43

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AMCONSUL OPORTO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ELECTION EVE: CONFIDENCE AND CONCERN

1. MIDNIGHT APRIL 23 BROUGHT TO AN END 22 DAYS OF CAMPAIGNING FOR WHAT PROMISES TO BE THE FIRST GENUINE ELECTION IN RECENT PORTUGUESE HISTORY. CARS FILLED WITH ACTIVISTS FROM ALL PARTIES CRISSCROSSED LISBON STREETS THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND EVENING, HONKING HORNS TO DRAW ATTENTION AND PASSING OUT LEAFLETS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO VOTE. EVEN THE NORMALLY QUIESCENT CDS WAS OUT INTO THE STREETS FOR LAST MINUTE PROPAGANDIZING. BY MIDNIGHT LISBON WAS AWASH IN PARTY PAPER OF ALL SIZES AND COLORS, WITH EVERY AVAILABLE WALL PLASTERED OVER WITH POSTERS. MANY VOTERS WILL HEAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF THAT THE DELUGE OF WORDS AND PAPER HAS ENDED, AND THAT THEY HAVE ONE DAY-- APRIL 24--TO THINK IN PEACE ABOUT THEIR VOTE.

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2. COSTA GOMES ON ELECTIONS: IN BRIEF TV AND RADIO ADDRESS TO

NATION AT NOON APRIL 24 PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES WELCOMED THE ELECTIONS AS "THE BEST OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS" OFFERED BY AFM TO PORTUGUESE PEOPLE. HE URGED PORTUGUESE TO GO TO THE POLLS SINCE, DESPITE IMPERFECTIONS, ELECTION RESULTS ARE THE BEST INDICATION OF THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. HE TERMED THE ELECTION A "TRANSCENDENTAL DECISION," STATING THAT POPULAR WILL IS THE TRUE SOURCE OF LEGITIMATE POWER. THE PRESIDENT ALSO SAID THAT PORTUGUESE PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO AND SHOULD MAKE A CHOICE AMONG THE AUTHENTIC, PLURALISTIC PARTIES. WITHOUT MENTIONING THE CONTROVERSIAL BLANK VOTE QUESTION, THE PRESIDENT MADE CLEAR THAT HE THOUGH THE PARTIES BY AND LARGE HAD DONE A GOOD JOB EDUCATING THE PEOPLE POLITICALLY, IMPLYING THEREBY THAT A BLANK VOTE WAS NOT NECESSARY. PRESIDENT ALSO MADE STRONG APPEAL FOR LAW AND ORDER ON ELECTION DAY. (IN CONTRAST TO THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS, COPCON DEPUTY COMMANDER GENERAL OTELO SRAIVA DE CARVALHO REPORTEDLY REMARKED APRIL 21 TO THE BBC THAT HE COULD NOT DISCERN A GOOD PARTY AND WAS SORRY ELECTIONS WERE TAKING PLACE.)

3. COPCON PROMISES TO KEEP ORDER: THE NATION'S MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAVE PROMISED TO DO ALL IN THEIR POWER, AND WILL RESORT TO FORCE IF NEED BE, TO GUARANTEE ORDER FOR ELECTIONS. AN AFM COMMUNIQUE ISSUED APRIL 23 REMINDED THE CHAIRMEN OF THE 14,000 ELECTORAL BOARDS THAT IF THEY NEED HELP IN QUELLING DISTURBANCES, THEY MAY CALL ON COPCON, WHICH IS READY TO RESPOND RAPIDLY. GENERAL OTELO MADE SAME POINT IN RADIO/TV SPECCH APRIL 23.

4. REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS: COL. CHARAIS, MEMBER OF REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND LEADING MEMBER OF AFM, TOLD CHARGE APRIL 23 THAT COUNCIL WAS INDEED CONCERNED ABOUT LAST-MINUTE ACTIONS TO UPSET ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS POSSIBLE TROUBLE ON ELECTION DAY, SAID STEPS WERE BEING TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT VOTING WENT OFF UNIMPEDED, BUT THAT COUNCIL HAD TO BE CONCERNED DUE TO PORTUGUESE INEXPERIENCE IN RUNNING A FREE ELECTION. CHARGE NOTED THAT NY FLIM FLAM WOULD BECOME KNOWN VERY QUICKLY, NOT ONLY IN PORTUGAL BUT TO WORLD AT LARGE; STRESSED IMPORTANCE AND UTILITY OF HONEST ELECTIONS. CHARAIS AGREED. CHARAIS ALSO VOLUNTEERED PREDICTION OF COMMUNIST PARTY VOTE; SAID MAXIMUM IMAGINABLE WOULD BE 20 PERCENT; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL DATA GAVE COMMUNISTS ABOUT 15 PERCENT; CHARAIS PERSONALLY THOUGHT PCP WOULD GET ABOUT 10 PERCENT.

5. PCP FINAL RALLY: PCP HELD FINAL CAMPAIGN RALLY IN LISBON STADIUM EVENING APRIL 23. EMBOFF PRESENT ESTIMATED 85-90,00 PERSONS ATTENDED RALLY WHICH WAS ADDRESSED BY ALVARO CUNHAL. RALLY WAS COMPLETELY ABSENT FROM PORTUGUESE PRESS AND NEWS MEDIA BECAUSE OF LAW PROHIBITING CAMPAIGN COVERAGE AFTER

MIDNIGHT APRIL 23. PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUE OF LARGE RALLY THEREBY
PARTLY LOST ON ELECTORATE.

6. JOURNALISTS EN MASSE: MORE THAN 800 FOREIGN JOURANLISTS
ARE IN PORTUGAL TO COVER THE ELECTIONS. THE LOCAL PRESS
BELIEVE--PROBABLY CORRECTLY--THAT THIS IS THE LARGEST
NUMBER OF FOREIGN NEWSPAPERMEN EVER ASSEMBLED IN PORTUGAL
AT ONE TIME.
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